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## CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE

### PERSONAL WATERCRAFT USE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#### ERRATA

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The following changes have been made to the *Personal Watercraft Use Environmental Assessment* for Cape Lookout National Seashore (Seashore) (December 2004) to correct minor statements of fact, update information and disclose minor adjustments to the preferred alternative and impact analysis. Changes are in response to public comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the proposed rule. Additions to the text are identified by underlines, and deletions are marked by strikeout.

#### PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

**Concern statement:** The spread of exotic species related to Personal Watercraft (PWC) operation is overlooked in the EA.

**Response:** After consultation with subject matter experts and available data, no exotic species are known to occur in areas accessible by PWC within the Seashore. Since no exotic species are known to occur in these areas, this topic has been addressed in the errata to the EA as an issue that was considered but not further evaluated.

#### ***TEXT CHANGES:***

#### ISSUES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

*Exotic species* – There are no known exotic species that occur in areas accessible by PWC within the Seashore; therefore, this topic will not be further evaluated.

#### ALTERNATIVES

**Concern statement:** A commenter stated that the PWC use restrictions as stated in the proposed rule are vague, confusing, and defective from an enforcement standpoint. There is also redundancy in the description.

**Response:** The description of alternative B states "PWC would be allowed to access these areas... by remaining perpendicular to shore and operating at flat-wake speed." This implies that any other type of access would be prohibited. However, language in the rule, errata to the EA, and the

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been rewritten to clarify the type of PWC use prohibited and locations within the Seashore where it is permitted. In addition, the phrase “recreational use” has been deleted.

**Concern statement:** The EA and rule text should be rewritten to state that all obligations and restrictions would be imposed on the PWC operator, not the PWC equipment. Organization of the rule should also be improved.

**Response:** The text in the rule, errata to the EA, and the FONSI has been clarified to state that the restrictions will be imposed on the PWC operator, not the PWC equipment. Organization of the rule has also been improved and text was clarified.

### ***TEXT CHANGES:***

## **ALTERNATIVE B: REINSTATE PWC USE UNDER A SPECIAL NPS REGULATION WITH ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)**

**Special Use Areas.** Ten special use areas would provide for PWC access within the Seashore boundaries. The PWC operators would be allowed to access these areas on North Core Banks, South Core Banks (including Cape Lookout), and Shackleford Banks by remaining perpendicular to shore and operating at flat-wake speed. Under this alternative, ~~PWC use would not be authorized for recreational use parallel to the shoreline, but only for access to those areas identified below specifically for landing purposes. In all cases, PWC would have access to the sound side of the barrier islands only. No PWC access to the seashore’s ocean side would be permitted. PWC may only be operated within the seashore to access the following sound-side~~ special use areas:

### **North Core Banks.**

- *Ocracoke Inlet Access* – Wallace Channel dock to the demarcation line in Ocracoke Inlet near Milepost 1
- *Old Drum Inlet Access* – Sound-side beach near Milepost 19 (as designated by signs), approximately 1/2 mile north of Old Drum inlet (adjacent to the cross-over route) encompassing approximately 50 feet

### **South Core Banks.**

- *Great Island Access* – Carly Dock ~~at Alger Willis Fish Camps~~ at Great Island Camp, near Milepost 30 (noted as South Core Banks- Great Island on map)
- *New Drum Inlet Access* – Sound-side beach near Milepost 23 (as designated by signs), approximately 1/4 mile long, beginning approximately 1/2 mile south of New Drum Inlet

### **Cape Lookout.**

- *Lighthouse Area North Access* – A zone 300 feet north of the NPS dock at the lighthouse ferry dock near Milepost 41.

**Access and Wake Restrictions.** Within these special use areas, all PWC operators would be required to remain perpendicular to shore and operate at flat-wake speed that would result in no visible wake within park waters.

**Superintendent's Authority.** The Park Superintendent may temporarily limit, restrict, or terminate access to the areas designated for PWC use after taking into consideration public health and safety, natural and cultural resource protection, and other management activities and objectives.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

**Concern statement:** One commenter questioned the PWC noise levels that were used in the analysis.

**Response:** A correction has been included in the errata to the EA to indicate that one PWC would emit 68 to 76 A-weighted dB at 82 feet. Based on the PWC noise levels from the Glen Canyon study, two PWC would emit 66 to 77 dB at 82 feet, 65 to 75 dB at 100 feet, and 59 to 69 dB at 200 feet. The noise levels of two PWC traveling together would be less than the NPS noise limit of 82 dB at 82 feet for all alternatives. Ambient sound levels at the Seashore vary due to the wide range of land cover types and visitor and other activities within and near the Seashore. In addition to intensity, other aspects of PWC noise were assessed, including changes in pitch. The operation of PWC 50 feet from shore would have minor adverse affects on the soundscape. In most locations, except in high use areas, natural sounds would prevail and motorized noise would be very infrequent or absent.

### ***TEXT CHANGES:***

## SOUNDSCAPES

### METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

#### **Intensity:**

The NPS contracted for noise measurements of PWC and other motorized vessels in 2001 at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Harris, Miller, Miller & Hanson, Inc. 2002). The results show that ~~maximum PWC noise levels at 50 feet ranged from~~ one PWC would emit 68 to 76 dBA at 82 feet. Noise levels for other motorboat types measured during that study ranged from 65 to 86 dBA at 50 feet, and were approximately 64 to 86 A-weighted decibels at 82 feet. However, PWC-generated noise may be more disturbing due to rapid changes in acceleration and direction of noise than noise from a constant source at 90 dB (EPA 1974, cited in Izaak Walton League 1999).

**Concern statement:** One commenter stated that the following three sections, unavoidable adverse impacts, loss in long-term availability or productivity to achieve short-term gain, and

irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources, pose some serious difficulties for the environmental impact analysis as a whole.

**Response:** Additional language has been added on the errata for the “Unavoidable Adverse Impacts” section to address the no-action alternative. The section “Loss in Long-term Availability or Productivity to Achieve Short-Term Gain” has been removed as per the errata.

The section “Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources” discusses the minor use of fossil fuels to power PWC being an irretrievable commitment of this resource. Considering the very small number of PWC operators that use the Seashore each year, which is estimated as less than 1 percent of visitors, the implementation of alternative B would not have more than a minor impact on irretrievable resources. Alternative B was chosen as the environmentally preferred alternative because it accommodates recreational opportunities for visitors while protecting sensitive natural resources within the Seashore.

**Concern statement:** One commenter stated that the section entitled "Loss in long-term availability or productivity to achieve short-term gain" is meant to represent a certain part of the CEQ NEPA Regulations, Section 1502.16, Environmental Consequences, and has not been adequately analyzed in the EA.

**Response:** This section is required in Environmental Impact Statements, but is optional in EAs, and will be removed from the EA text per the errata.

### ***TEXT CHANGES:***

## **UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS**

Unavoidable adverse impacts are impacts that cannot be avoided and cannot be mitigated, and therefore would remain throughout the duration of the action. The following list describes potential adverse impacts related to the alternatives being considered:

- PWC use would continue to cause minor levels of pollutant emissions into national seashore water and air under alternatives A and B. These impacts would decrease in the long-term due to the required improvements in engine emission technology. No PWC pollutant emissions would result under the no-action alternative.
- PWC use and landing along the shoreline under alternatives A and B would have adverse impacts on the park’s natural soundscape and could occasionally cause flight response in wildlife that are present along the shore. PWC use would not impact the park’s soundscape or wildlife under the no-action alternative.
- Submerged aquatic vegetation could be adversely affected by PWC users under alternatives A and B. These impacts would not be substantial and would not cause long-term changes in vegetation. There would be no impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation under the no-action alternative.
- Continued PWC use under alternatives A and B would have adverse impacts on the experiences of other visitors, through occasional noise and visual intrusions. Under

the no-action alternative, PWC users who could no longer ride within the national seashore would be adversely affected.

**~~Loss in Long Term Availability or Productivity to Achieve Short term Gain~~**

~~None of these resources would be impacted to the point of impairment or long term permanent loss.~~